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HOW TO TEACH BEGINNING READING. III¹

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III. BEGINNING BOOK READING

[*Continued*]

B. PRINCIPLES

1. *Secure continuous, coherent, rapid, meaningful reading.*—The largest factor in determining the nature of the first lessons in book reading which were described in the preceding article is probably the desire to continue the formation of correct reading attitudes and habits by facilitating continuous, coherent, rapid, meaningful reading by the pupils. This purpose predominated throughout the pre-primer reading and is easily realized in the early book lessons as a result of the skill acquired in the pre-primer reading. To the observer who is unfamiliar with progressive methods in teaching reading, it is a revelation to see first-grade children during their first three or four days with book reading rapidly complete some twenty pages of storied material with interest, comprehension, fluency, and dispatch.

2. *Complexities of first book reading simplified by first reading same story on the chart.*—Reading in a book for the first time requires many complex mental and muscular activities of the pupil. These include not only mental attention to the forms of the words, phrases, and sentences, but also difficulties in holding the book and especially in moving the eyes from word to word and from the end of one line to the beginning of the next. If the pupil has had no preliminary reading practice, it is futile to expect coherent, continuous, smooth reading under such complicated, trying conditions. On the other hand, if he has acquired some general facility

¹ This is the third of a series of articles on this topic. The first two described the methods used in pre-primer chart and blackboard reading and sample lessons illustrating the beginning of book reading.

² Sample lessons taught by Marjorie Hardy and Laura Lucas.

in reading larger printed forms and particularly has read upon a chart the same story that he undertakes to read in the book, the mental difficulties of coherent reading of this first story are almost entirely removed, leaving only the muscular adjustments of hand and eye to give difficulty.

3. *Continuous, thrilling, storied material encourages page-after-page reading.*—In order to encourage continuous coherent reading, the content of the first book lessons must be of a connected, continuous character. Hence, in the best recent primers we find real stories at the very beginning, each of which may extend over several pages. Each story has a definite plot which tends to carry the little reader along to the end. Great skill has been exhibited by a number of writers and publishers since about 1910 in composing and publishing such material. The stories are usually classics of childhood, such as "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Goldilocks," "The Little Red Hen," and "The Ginger Bread Boy," which have proved fascinating to children for generations. It is an interesting historical fact that while such stories had been contained in reading books for the later grades for many years, it was not until recently that they were introduced into the primers for the first lessons. This introduction came as the result of the acceptance of the general point of view in teaching reading which has been emphasized in these articles, namely, developing attitudes and habits of securing meaningful, interesting experiences from the very beginning of reading.

4. *Repetitional phrases of certain child classics especially facilitate continuous, easy reading.*—Since the classic plots of children's stories were already at hand, the skill of the primer writers consisted chiefly in phrasing the narrative so as to facilitate easy reading. Stories constructed on the general plan of "The House that Jack Built" were frequently chosen in order to secure repetition of words and phrases. Such a story usually has some unsolved problem that holds interest to the end and involves one of the characters meeting the others in turn in such a manner as to call for frequent repetition of the whole story up to date. Thus there is a gradual addition of new material or difficulties with frequent repetition of older phrases. This gives a happy balance between easy repetition and a

few new words, and enables the children early to read with considerable fluency, provided the teacher is skilled in introducing the story so as to anticipate the vocabulary difficulties.

5. *Preparation for reading the story includes dramatic telling, new words on cards, telling from pictures.*—In preparing for the reading of the second story, Miss Hardy introduced it by first telling it dramatically herself and then retelling it with display of new words upon cards at appropriate places. These words were then restudied in connection with parts of the oral story. Finally, after the books were in hand, the children, before reading the story, told it as they found it represented in the pictures. This practice attaches especial importance and significance to the pictures in the making of a primer. As a consequence, high-grade artists are employed to draw them. The results are pictures full of story and action which the pupils delight in beholding.

6. *Rapidly read many stories in many books.*—When the story is finally read, it is completed rapidly and the next story soon begun. This eliminates the old-fashioned practice of reading the same stories in a single primer over and over. Instead, after one primer is quickly finished, another is begun, with the result that from ten to twenty books, including first readers, may be completed in one year. Since nearly all these books possess the same type of stories about animals and common things, the vocabulary demands may be quite small, but the actual practice in fundamental reading habits very large. In order to make these fundamental reading habits the chief factor in the reading period, most of the repetitional, gameful drill with word cards is placed in a separate period. This separate drill activity, through automatizing the recognition of sight words, greatly aids the activity of the reading period. By being separated, however, it is kept from detracting from the interpretative reading attitudes and the mental and muscular practice in continuous reading which predominate in the reading period.

7. *Muscular adjustments of eyes in finding and following the line aided by marker.*—The muscular practice referred to consists largely of practice in moving the eyes step by step along each line and then swinging them back to the beginning of the next line.

Little children have special difficulties in making such fine motor adjustments. Even an adult reader has difficulty in some cases in finding with his eyes the beginning of the next line, for example, in case he is reading a very wide page containing very long lines. An adult may even have difficulty in keeping his eyes on a single line in cases like reading a wide statistical table. In such cases an adult is very likely to use a ruler or a piece of paper to mark the line and guide his eyes. The same device was used by Miss Hardy's children in the form of a strip of manila paper. This not only aids each child's eyes in finding and following the line, but also aids the teacher in holding the attention of all the pupils upon the same line as she says, "Now move your markers to the third line," etc. It thus contributes to securing the continuous, coherent, rapid reading which we have emphasized.

Summary of rules for beginning book reading.—The discussion of the teaching of the first lessons in book reading may be summarized in the seven following rules:

1. Secure continuous, coherent, rapid, meaningful reading.
2. Introduce the first story by preliminary reading of it on a chart in order to simplify the complexities of the first book reading.
3. Use continuous, thrilling storied material to encourage page-after-page reading.
4. Choose child classics with repetitional phrases to facilitate continuous, easy reading.
5. Prepare for fluent reading of the first few stories by telling each story before reading it, showing new words on cards, and having the pupils retell the story from the pictures.
6. Read rapidly many stories in many books.
7. Have each pupil use a line marker to aid the eyes and to secure attention of all pupils to the same line.

In this series of articles we have emphasized the teaching of reading as vitally related to children's experiences in the first grade with games, constructive activities, nursery rhymes, and thrilling adventures found in the classic stories of childhood. All the technique employed in the teaching has tended to establish in the pupils the fundamental reading attitude and habits of trying to get meaningful, interesting experiences from printed material.

At the same time, the child has been acquiring certain mechanical habits of moving his eyes and a vocabulary of sight words which he can use as tools in reading many stories containing his familiar vocabulary. It is highly desirable, however, to extend the pupil's skill so that he can read material in which unfamiliar printed forms occur; in other words, to make him an independent reader of all types of material adapted to his age. For this reason, after the fundamental correct reading attitudes and habits had been well started, we found Miss Hardy introducing the third phase of first-grade reading, to which we shall now turn our attention.

IV. INDEPENDENT RECOGNITION OF NEW WORDS PHONETIC ANALYSIS

A. SAMPLE LESSONS

Third phase of beginning reading.—The descriptions of the reading in Miss Hardy's room carried us through the first two principal phases: (1) Incidental reading and the reading of rhymes and stories from charts. (2) Beginning to read in the primer. At the beginning of the sixth week, the third phase of reading was introduced, namely, phonetic training to enable the children to analyze and name new words instead of having to be taught each word "by sight." We shall describe Miss Hardy's introduction to the phonetic sounds and to the phonetic analysis of words and then take up a scientific study of the necessity and value of such training.

Some children early interested in rhyming words and in similar beginnings.—Occasionally, before the beginning of the sixth week, some of the children gave evidence of their natural interest in words that sound alike by voluntary remarks about words that rhymed in the jingles they were studying, such as "Jill" and "hill." Some of them had even noticed the similar beginnings of words as Miss Hardy wrote them on the board. For example, the word "Save" had become very familiar as a note to the janitor. One day when the teacher wrote "Sam," a pupil said "You begin that word just like 'Save.'" On another occasion a pupil suggested that "man" and "met" looked something alike.

First phonetic lesson. Learning the sound of "m" as initial sound of four familiar words.—The first sound which the children learned

was that of the consonant *m*. It was taught during a portion of a word-study period. For the lesson Miss Hardy selected four words beginning with *m*, which the children had used in their reading and which they knew well by sight, namely, *met*, *man*, *make*, and *made*. After some preliminaries, the major steps in the teaching were the following:

1. Miss Hardy asked the children to listen carefully as she pronounced the four words and then to tell her what part *sounded the same*. They readily said, "The first part."

2. She then said, "Watch my lips as I say each word so that you can hear that first sound."

3. Then she brought out a small chart on which the words were printed. These were pronounced and the first sound connected with the sight of the first letter.

4. She wrote the words on the blackboard and the children noted how they all began the same.

5. The children were then asked to think of other words which began with the same sound. One said, "Money." Another said, "Margery." One child who was not getting the point said, "Little."

6. The teacher said, "I am thinking of something the cow gives which begins with this sound." The children said, "Milk." Again, "I am thinking of a kind of pie we have at Thanksgiving." "Mince," they said. Similar questions with easy obvious answers were given until most of the children had the sound well in mind and connected with the beginnings of certain familiar words.

Second phonetic lesson. Learning the sound of "s." *Details of technique.*—Two days later during a word-study period the second sound was taught, namely, that of the consonant *s*. About seven minutes were consumed in the following activities:

1. "The other day we discovered many words that begin with the same sound," said Miss Hardy. The children immediately began to hum the sound of *m* and volunteered, "met, man," etc., as she held up the old chart.

2. "This morning we are going to have some more words which you know and see with what sound they begin. Look at my lips and listen," she said, as she pronounced, *seed*, *so*, *said*, *some*—all

familiar words from the reading lessons. The children immediately volunteered the hissing *s* sound. One child said, "That's the snake's sound." "How do you know?" asked Miss Hardy. "My mother told me."

3. A chart with the words printed on it was then studied, the teacher pointing at the beginning of each word as it was pronounced.

4. In response to the teacher's request, "I want you to tell me a word that begins with this sound," the children gave "sore" and "say." The teacher added "Sunday" and said, "I am thinking of a boy's name that begins with this sound." "John," said one child. "No, Sam is the word." "That's my uncle's name," volunteered one of the youngsters who were nearly all ready now with additional words such as "saw" and "salmon."

5. "Are you ready to see me write one of these words?" queried Miss Hardy. "I am going to write this first word," pointing at "seed." . . . "What does it say?" and so on till all were written.

6. "Now watch me as I erase one of the words; then tell me which one it was." The game element in this activity held the children's rapt attention. Finally all words were erased.

7. The children were then taught to write the word "seed" at the blackboard.

8. Before dismissing the children the phonetic work of the period was then briefly recalled by Miss Hardy, with such remarks as "What sound does seed begin with? . . . What was another word on that card? . . . Let's say them all through again. . . . How many think you will know that sound when you see a word in your books that begins with it?"

Puzzled about teaching word families. Need experiments on how children learn phonetic analysis.—With similar detailed devices, Miss Hardy proceeded to teach the sounds of other consonants. She then reached a stage that puzzles first-grade teachers of phonetics, namely, teaching the sounds and combinations of the vowels. The puzzling issue is whether (1) to attach the vowel to the final consonant of a short word, for example, "*c at*," thus giving the "at" family, or (2) to attach the vowel to the

initial consonant, thus, “*ca t*”, which is urged by some experts in phonetics who object to the “family” idea. Much argument has been printed concerning this issue, but I know of no precise experimental study of *how children learn to pronounce* which will give us a valid, scientific answer. There is much discussion in terms of the phonetic structure of words, but few experiments on *how children learn*. For this reason, Miss Hardy stated that she did not feel as confident of her technique at this stage as in some of the other stages. However, the following account gives a general idea of part of her procedure.

Vowel sounds derived by cutting consonants from short words.—The following table of words illustrates the material used in the derivation of the short vowel sounds.

cat	met	bit	not	cut
bat	get	fit	got	but
rat	let	hit	hot	nut

When the teacher wrote the first column of this material, the children easily recognized the words or quickly learned them. Having already learned the consonant sounds, they easily gave each when the teacher covered up the other parts of the word.

When she erased the final *t* and asked what was left, the children said, “*ca, ba, ra.*” Then, when she erased the initial consonants of these syllables and asked what was left, the pupils gave the short sound of *a*. Similar procedure with the other columns, plus many additional short words, enabled the children themselves to discover the short sounds of the vowels and to gain skill in pronouncing new short words containing them. They were told that these vowel sounds were called *short*.

Long sounds learned; then rule determining long or short.—Later, the children were told that sometimes the vowels are not called short, but are called the opposite; whereupon they themselves supplied the word “long.” From a study of words which they already knew, such as “late” and “rode,” they became familiar with the long sounds and learned that generally when a short word ends in *e* the latter is silent and the other vowel is long.

Many devices for concreteness, activity, interest, and drill.—The reader will readily understand that this later teaching was not

carried on in the rapid, abstract manner that this brief description of it may suggest, but extended over many days and at all stages was characterized by the concrete beginnings, the varied delightful activities of the pupils, and the gameful, repetitional drill devices which we found ever present in the earlier descriptions of Miss Hardy's lessons. Owing to the great length of these articles we must refrain from giving further details concerning the phonetic instruction and present briefly the general principles of training in the independent recognition of new words which Miss Hardy's lessons indicate.

B. PRINCIPLES

1. *Without phonetic training pupils become inaccurate, dependent readers.*—Complete proof of the necessity and value of phonetic training in the recognition of new words must be postponed until the next article which will present the results of scientific studies of reading. We may anticipate, however, by stating that pupils who have not had training in independent word analysis prove to be, on the average, much more inaccurate in their reading than pupils who have had this training. Even from common observation one can readily appreciate the desirability of training pupils so that they can rapidly and accurately decipher the new words which they meet in their everyday reading in and out of school, instead of merely recognizing the words which they have already learned by sight.

2. *Teach in a separate period.*—In order to protect the sight-reading period from interfering attitudes, the phonetic instruction and drill are best given in a separate period. Such skill as is acquired in these separate periods will be used, however, where needed in the regular reading period. This will be illustrated later in an account of a second-grade lesson.

3. *Derive the sounds by analyzing familiar words.*—In Miss Hardy's lessons it was shown how the word drill upon certain words from the reading lessons was naturally and easily directed into a study of the initial sounds of the words. Some of the children had already of their own accord shown an interest in these sounds. The study of the latter represents the final step in the analytical learning, from whole to parts, already described. Such learning

proceeds from the whole story to individual lines and phrases, then to drill on individual words, and finally to the sounds composing the words.

4. *Teach the easy sounds early.*—This rule is illustrated by the consonants *s* and *b*. The hissing sound of the *s* is easily separated from the words and pronounced by children, but the sound of *b* is more difficult even for an adult to learn to make. The ordinary result when an adult tries to pronounce *b* is really the sound of the phonogram *bu*.

5. *Teach the most useful sounds early.*—This rule is illustrated by the short and long sounds of the vowels. One authority estimates that in the Jones spelling list 61 per cent of the phonetic syllables have short vowels, and 10 per cent of the phonetic syllables have the vowels made long by final *e*. These frequencies justify us in early teaching the short sounds of the vowels, and quickly following with words in which the vowels are made long by final *e*.

6. *Teach habits of analyzing words that will help in all later reading.*—In general, this rule means that pupils will be given much practice in straightforward attack upon unfamiliar or new words. One of the facts which will come out in the next article on the scientific investigations of reading is the existence of very halting, confused methods of attacking new words that characterize many poor readers. Only sufficient practice in using methods of phonetic analysis will give mastery of them and lead to a confident straightforward attack.

7. *Use a ready-made scientific system of teaching phonetics.*—The few comments which we have made suggest that the effective mastery of phonetic tools and analysis cannot be left to the haphazard effort of inexperienced unskilled teachers. Just as in the teaching of handwriting and spelling, we need ready-made, scientifically constructed systems. In phonetic teaching these systems will be derived from a study of (1) the phonetics of the common English words and (2) the methods and devices by which children most readily acquire skill in phonetic analysis. There is available at least one system in which the first factor, namely, the phonetics of the language, has been given careful consideration. It also has applied such knowledge of how children learn phonetic

analysis as is available. However, many more detailed investigations are needed of children's experiences in learning particular sounds, phonetic combinations, and syllabification before ready-made systems for teaching phonetic analysis can be perfected.

Conclusion of first-grade reading. Correct reading habits plus skill in word analysis.—This will conclude the discussion of first-grade reading as derived from the actual lessons observed in Miss Hardy's room. These lessons and the interpretative discussion have given a notion of modern progressive methods of teaching reading to pupils in the first grade. The initial emphasis is placed on forming the correct reading attitude of trying to get meaningful interesting experiences from printed material. For this purpose action words, nursery rhymes, and continuous storied material were used to enable children early to take a delight in fluent reading. After the fundamental reading attitudes and habits had been correctly started, systematic training for the independent phonetic analysis of new words was started at the beginning of the sixth week. Throughout the first year both of these types of practice are emphasized, namely, (1) easy, fluent, delightful reading and (2) practice in phonetic analysis. In order to give the reader an idea of the results of such teaching, as well as the modifications that occur in the technique as the children gain more skill, a reading lesson observed in the autumn in a second-grade room, will be described briefly.

V. A SECOND-GRADE LESSON ILLUSTRATING ACHIEVEMENTS AND TECHNIQUE

Preparation. Discussion of monkeys and crocodiles.—The second-grade children assembled in their little chairs in the front of the room just as the first-graders had done. Miss Laura Lucas, their teacher, spent about two minutes in a preparatory discussion before turning to the story which they were to read. Among her questions and remarks, which were interspersed with answers from the children, were the following: "How many of you, when you went to the zoo, saw the crocodiles?" "How do they move, quickly or slowly?" "Do they climb trees like monkeys?" (Some of the children said they do.) "What kind of country do they live in,

cold or hot?" Where do monkeys live; in what kind of country?" "If a crocodile wanted to catch a monkey, how would he do it?" "I thought this morning you would like to read a story about how a crocodile tried to catch a monkey." "The animals we are going to read about lived in a country called 'India,'" said the teacher as she wrote the word "India" on the board. She then wrote "Mr. Crocodile" and "Mr. Monkey," saying, "They called each other by these names."

Silent reading. Books presented to pupils.—"When I give you your books, turn to page 85, read silently, and tell me if there are any words you do not know."

Much whispered vocalization indicated stage of development.—The children followed these directions and read the story silently with perfect attention. There was much whispered vocalization, showing that most of the children were not reading to themselves any faster than they could pronounce the words.

Assistance in phonetic analysis of new words given individually.—The children that needed assistance advanced individually to the teacher who was now seated in a low chair. As each child pointed out the words he did not know, Miss Lucas gave him help in such a low tone that the others were not distracted. As a rule she did not tell a child outright, but helped him use his phonetic ability. For example, she said, "You have two vowels here, Clarence; which one do you pronounce?"

Lack of phonetic training necessitated much help for one child.—Some of the children did not need any assistance. Most of them asked only once. One girl, however, requested help five times. After the lesson Miss Lucas told me that this child entered from another school where she had not had phonetic training; consequently, she could not decipher the new words. She was being given special training to correct her deficiency.

Difficult words written on board in order of occurrence.—As the children asked for help on particular words, Miss Lucas made a memorandum of each on a card and then wrote them on the board in the order in which they occurred in the story, together with other words or phrases to which she desired to call their attention. The

list is as follows: greedy, catch, bank, fond of fruit, swam along, surface, started, stupid, angry, narrow, moved, crawled, hello, afraid. Those who had finished the silent reading were told to study the words on the board.

Pupils related the story. Showed successful silent reading.—After all the pupils had finished reading the story silently, Miss Lucas said, “Put your finger in the place and close your books. Will someone tell us just how it happened that the crocodile wanted to catch the monkey?” A pupil gave his answer.

“What was his first plan to catch the monkey?” A boy described the plan.

“Tell us about the second plan, Damon.”

The pupils talked very freely and related the story so clearly that it was obvious they had thoroughly grasped it in their silent reading.

Difficult words on board. Explained if pupils requested.—Miss Lucas then said, “Here are some of the words you asked for. If there is any word here that any child doesn’t know, hold up your hand.” She then explained certain of the words as the pupils requested.

Pupils pronounce and weave new words into oral story.—Miss Lucas then reviewed all the words by telling the story briefly and pointing at each word as it worked into the story. Instead of pronouncing it herself, however, she had the pupils say it in unison. For example, the last word “afraid” was inserted by the children as she said, “Then the monkey was so . . . that he didn’t go near the place any more.”

Oral reading. Rapid, connected, fluent audience reading aided by teacher’s suggestions.—Since there were several visitors present, Miss Lucas then had the children read the story orally in a rapid continuous manner. She gave occasional suggestions such as the following:

“I’ll ask Esther to start reading. . . .” “Remember, now you are speaking to him, Esther.” “What did he answer, Frank?” “Then, how did the crocodile find the monkey?” “What did the crocodile say, Robert?” “Not quite so fast, Emerson, so

we can hear every word." "Now, Constance, these people are talking back and forth. Read just like you were talking, just like you would say it if you were the monkey."

Plan to represent characters of story and improve reading.—At the end of the reading there was a discussion arising out of the teacher's suggestion that next time they read the story again with different children taking the parts of the characters in the story. Miss Lucas asked, "How might we make our reading better?" The pupils gave various answers such as "Get our words together," "Read like people talk," and "Know the place."

New problem of rate of oral and silent reading.—It is scarcely necessary to enter into a detailed statement of the principles of teaching reading illustrated by this second-grade lesson. There is the same careful balance of (1) rapid grasp of meanings and (2) skill in independent analysis of new words which prevailed in the later weeks of the first-grade reading. The pupils are now real readers; they can take up a story adapted to their stage of development and get from its silent perusal the meanings and delight which it is intended to convey. There are, however, certain facts which need further discussion and interpretation. For example, though the children were reading silently in the ordinary sense of the term, most of them were vocalizing quite audibly, showing that they were not reading any faster than they could pronounce the words. The boy, Emerson, however, could recognize words and read so rapidly silently that when he came to read orally he enunciated so fast that the audience could not understand him easily. He had become such a skilled, rapid, silent reader, Miss Lucas said, that she provided him with much supplementary reading to fill his time.

Such instances raise important questions concerning the *rates* of oral and silent reading and the *relations* between oral and silent reading. These questions have been subjected to careful experimental study from which important conclusions have been derived concerning methods of teaching reading. In the next article these scientific studies will be discussed.

[To be concluded]